

**Address by the President-Rector Magnificus
of Assumption University of Thailand
at the 46th Commencement Exercises
Queen Sirikit National Convention Center
Saturday, January 12, 2019**

Chairman of the University Council,
President Emeritus,
Campus Minister,
Members of AU Community,
Honored Guests,
Families and Friends of the Graduates, and
Dear AU Graduates, Class XLVI

Welcome to 46th Commencement Ceremony of Assumption University. On this 12th day of New Year I wish you all a very Happy New Year 2019.

It is customary that I first acknowledge the presence of our honored guests. The first on my list is Rev. Bro. Surasit Sukchai, the Chairman of the University Council, who is presently the Provincial Superior of the Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel, Province of Thailand. The next is Rev. Bro. Prathip M. Komolmas, the President Emeritus, who is the mastermind of Suvarnabhumi Campus of AU. He is present here in spite of his ailing health. Within AU family, we also have the Vice Presidents, the Deans, the Chairpersons, the Program Directors, and the faculty and staff members. All of them are present here today to honor you and to congratulate you on your success.

Outside the hall, your parents, relatives and friends are eagerly awaiting to congratulate you, share your excitement and the joy of success. On your behalf, I would like to thank each one of them, not only for being present here but for their support and dedication bestowed on you throughout your long journey for this remarkable achievement.

To all of you graduates, the Class of 2017 (Class XLVI), my hearty congratulations. Whatever may be levels of achievement you have gained (Bachelor's, Master's or Doctorate), or whatever GPAs you have attained, I congratulate you because it's a milestone in your race of success, as strongly desired by yourself and your near and dear ones in particular. It is one of the values treasured by our society.

After graduation, what is your future plan? Some of you are working; some are looking for a job; some will continue to go for higher studies; some others may want to take rest for some time depending on your aspirations.

These days, many graduates are being attracted by high-paid corporate jobs. The appeal to a lucrative job, position, money, the promise of stimulating work, and its security will always be at the top of your mind. The pursuit of self-interest: big house, nice car, money culture, iPhone, etc. will be with you for some years and that is normal. You have undertaken a new journey in search for measures of personal success. Is it necessary that AU graduates

should apply to work in big companies? Is it a sign of greatness?

Some of you have your family businesses to manage, some have the jobs waiting. Many others have to apply for new jobs. Interviews after interviews, some time you may feel frustrated and scared. Worse than that, the newspapers report says that over one hundred thousand students graduating this year will be without job. Moreover, a large majority of the nearly 2 billion global youths will not have job skills necessary to participate in the workforce by 2030.

As AU graduates, what should be your disposition?

Graduation is a time of reflection for both the faculty members and the graduates to think more deeply about **education** and **aspirations**.

Looking at the environment of the world today, several characteristics can be pointed out, namely, globalization, internationalization, economy of speed, unpredicted environments, limited resources, stakeholders' expectations, knowledge-based society, technology driven economies, multiculturalism, complexity of the problems, including the Fourth Industrial Revolution, to list just a few. I do not need to elaborate on each. But in such a dynamic environment, the University is aware of the challenges and the disruptive future that come along with the rapid innovations. The world of employment keeps on changing day by day.

May I take this opportunity to recall the past key events of your lives on campus.

The march into the hall on Wai Khru Day in your first year signifies the introduction of the students onto the preparation for the battle of life: to combat your ignorance and to get rid of your bad characters (to form you as a noble being) and to gain the expertise in the **art of thinking** and to cope with the new world.

Again, today the administrators, the faculty and staff will line up on both sides of the hallway to send you off to the battle of real life. You triumphantly walk out with pride and confidence. You are equipped with all necessary weapons (knowledge and skills) to combat your future challenges. The march that you begin today is the march of victory.

Your education at AU included the thinking process to solve problems you faced, the process of understanding the principles of knowledge in the areas of your interest and expertise among others. Your engagement with administrators, faculty, staff, including your peers have given you solid training to face difficult situations in life. What you are facing in real life situations are of the same forms but in different contexts. You must learn to apply those principles, learn to recognize their values (**for learning is indispensable for leadership**).

Dear Graduates:

At this point, I do not want to burden you with advices on how to get a good job. Such advices are abound either from your parents or relatives or even friends. As you are about to enter the most uncertain and thrilling period of your lives, **I just want to give you 5 points for reflection** that can assist you anytime in your life.

1. Know Oneself

- AU remains a fertile and nurturing environment which developed your personality through pedagogy.
- During your college life, you learned how to share **opinions**, how to learn **science**, and how to reach **illumination** (wisdom) to assist you in life.
- Many of you were busy with lots of other activities and in times of urgency concentrated only on gaining knowledge or subject contents to earn good grades. You know a lot of things except “**Yourself.**” To know and understand oneself fully means that you understand your emotions, desires, likings, abilities, and others. “*To know thyself is the beginning of wisdom,*” said Socrates. Hence, for cultivating wisdom you must...
 - (i) **Know your values.** They act as your guides to decision-making and motivators for goals. For example, you may have such values for helping others, being creative, having financial security, and so forth.
 - (ii) **Know your interests** and these include your passion, hobbies, and anything that draws your attention over a sustained period of time.
 - (iii) **Know your temperament** – your choices and preferences.
 - (iv) **Know your biorhythms** – the right time or when you prefer to do things. When you schedule your activities, at what time of day you are at your best.
 - (v) **Know (life)** the most meaningful events of your life to discover your identity, your mission and your goals.
 - (vi) **Know your strengths** and these include abilities, skills, and talents and character (e.g. loyalty, respect for others, love of learning, fairness, and more).

2. Lifelong Learning

- The word “**lifelong**” may mislead you that you are sure to have long life and forget “**learning**” along the way.
- Lifelong learning is the “ongoing, voluntary, and self-motivated” pursuit of knowledge for either **personal** or **professional** reasons.
- Therefore, it not only enhances social inclusion, active citizenship, and personal development, but also self-sustainability, as well as competitiveness and employability.
- Now you are out of educational institution, you should **continue to learn** to enhance your understanding of the world around you. It will provide you with more and better opportunities to improve your quality of life.
- The world now becomes your best teacher. You stand only to gain for your personal development and your professional life. We have to adapt to changes going on in the world and make more of ourselves.
- Learning is all about **change**, and **change** drives learning. Throughout life, changes occur that are large and small. We learn to adapt to these changes unconsciously. We learn new behaviors and skills that lead to transformational changes.
- Lifelong learning also demands your **readiness** to change and learn. People who seek new knowledge (like to try new things, and are sensitive to demands and challenges in their environments) have learned how to be generative.
- It is not feasible to equip you with all the knowledge and skills you need in life during your campus life. Moreover, the environment keeps on changing creating new disruptive challenges. You should manage your own learning in a variety of

contexts throughout your lifetimes.

- Learning is the single best investment of our time that we can make. As Benjamin Franklin said, *“An investment in knowledge pays the best interest.”* This is the reason why the world’s smartest and busiest people find one hour a day for deliberate learning, while others make excuses about how busy they are.

3. Discipline Oneself – Self-discipline and self-motivation

- When you practice **self-discipline** you feel like you are in control of your life. You feel content and motivated because you are moving toward your goals.
- One of America’s leading authors on the development of human potential, Brian Tracy, said: *If I had to pick the number one key to success, it would be self-discipline. It is the key to personal greatness. It is the magic quality that open all doors for you, and makes everything else possible.*
- With self-discipline, the average person can rise as fast as his talents and intelligence can take him. But without self-discipline, a person with every blessing will seldom rise above mediocrity.
- What is, then, self-discipline? According to Thomas Huxley, in a simple explanation, *“Do what you should do, when you should do it, whether you feel like it or not.”*
- Let us also remember what Harry E. Fosdick, an American pastor has said *“No stream or gas drives anything until it is confined, no Niagara has ever turned into light and power until it is tunneled, and no life ever grows great until it is focused, dedicated and disciplined.”*
- Self-discipline can change you and transform your life in different areas. Whether you want to accomplish your **goals**, transform your **character**, or apply it in the area of time management, personal health, money/finances, courage, or social responsibility, **self-discipline** will be key to your success.

4. Keep Connected

- Life itself is a network of relationships with all: family, friends and associates. Our success in life depends largely on how we redefine our relationships with those who interact with us. As you move on in life, try to maintain relationships with people whom you have known them or spent a part of your life with them. They may be your childhood friends, classmates and your acquaintances from your alma mater.
- You will certainly come into contact with more people in your work life and social life, try to build good relationships with them. Good relationships help to build **trust**, create a sense of **belonging and identity**. It helps to build confidence for yourself and in your ability to pursue your goals.
- For building relationships, certain principles should also be kept in mind.
 - (i) You take full responsibility for the relationship and expect nothing in return.
 - (ii) The quality of your relationships is more important than the quantity.
 - (iii) Be persistent with your graciousness and kindness. Try to find a model for yourself, a model that would help you put relationships in perspective. Transform your relationships.

5. Accept Failures

- Failure is not a situation anyone wants to be identified with but it is a part of our life and living. When it happens, it should be taken as a means to an end.

- Some of you must have experienced such situation when you got grade “D” or “F” in certain subjects. Some of you failed because of your negligence; some of you repeated the same course several times due to thousand and one reasons.
- Failure means you have not gotten it right. What you can do is to try again and in the process gain more experience. Examine what made you fail and have the courage to correct the mistakes. Change your behavior if you expect different and better results. Otherwise, with the *same behavior and moving on the same path, you are sure to meet the same failure*, as Einstein mentioned.
- There is always something positive to learn from your failures. Keep moving forward. Having failure and success means that your life is in motion. Both “failure and success” is just a journey, not a destination. Always keep in mind that ...
 - Life is not a straight line. There are many twists and turns. Have time to step back and reflect on it.
 - Look at the situation or event that happens from different angles. Then, move forward with renewed dynamism and courage.

As you are leaving your alma mater, it’s time for you to put the principles you have learned into practice. Try to strengthen what you already have and add what is lacking. The dynamism in you come only from the value and efforts you put into things, events or people. Keep only a meaningful memories and experiences.

I have full confidence in each one of you. Whether you graduated with GPA 4.0 or only 2.0, you have the ability to thrive and become prosperous. You have trained hard in your formation years. Continue to learn, unlearn, and relearn as time goes by. New bodies of knowledge seem to be created every day. Our ability to understand and adapt to continuous change is critical to success in the 21st century. While living in the world of material things, do not forget the spiritual world. Your personal relationship with the “**Supreme Being**” and your relationship with “**human beings**” and all created things are equally meaningful to life. Your journey in life experiences of both “**Supreme Being**” and “**human beings**” will contribute to your growth as a person, and your contribution to society will depend on your growth.

The new era of **Industry 4.0** asks more from you. You cannot remain innate and just respond to what happens. You are required to have critical thinking skills for swifter actions and agile capability to solve problems. You have to look at the world from a whole new viewpoint, new perspectives to drive decisions, to build confidence and to shape solutions. Your mindset is an underlying factor shaping your behavior and eventually driving results.

The 48th World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting in Davos-Kloster, Switzerland held from Jan. 23-26, 2018 set the theme as “**Creating a shared Future in a Fractured World.**”

We are moving headlong into a **new world order**. The polarized forces of cooperation and competition can be seen everywhere. The disruption is new normal.

The campus is a replica of society. Universities prioritize more on both **academic** knowledge and research veering away from the proverbial pursuit of “**Truth.**” **Liberal arts and value-based learning** has gone out of vogue. The government prioritizes the production

of a highly-skilled labor force and the investment in **research and development (R&D)**.

As educators, we are obliged to prepare students to be graduates for the world of the 21st century. And **AU still holds on to true education: the education that has to do with the whole being, and with the whole period of existence possible to man.** Such education provides more than mental discipline, or physical training. It strengthens the character as well as the purposeful life, so that **truth and righteousness** are not sacrificed to selfishness or worldly ambitions.

Dear Graduates:

I know very well that your mind at this time is dissipated with so many things. There is no time for you to reflect on your life at this moment. You can come back to them whenever you want later on in life. The University has **“Alumni Community”** of which you can keep connected with AU. Remain grateful to all those who contribute to the success in your life. Chase your dreams. Move forward with confidence in your capabilities and have courage to face all difficulties and hardship that may come your way. Be good ambassadors of AU wherever you be.

Once again, on behalf of everyone, I wish you very sincere and hearty congratulations on your graduation. We are so happy to share with your excitement. I’m sure, today will be only the first of many proud successful moments for you. What is most important for you is to move forward and put all you have learned into practice.

Be aware of what you need to do now and what you previously neglected to do. As you are on your own, try to make up for the time lost. Now you have accomplished one of the good starting points in your life, that is, a solid education. This is a foundation and start-up for each of you.

May God bless you on your journey in life with happiness and prosperity, always!

Bancha Saenghiran, f.s.g., Ph.D.
President – Rector Magnificus
January 12, 2019